THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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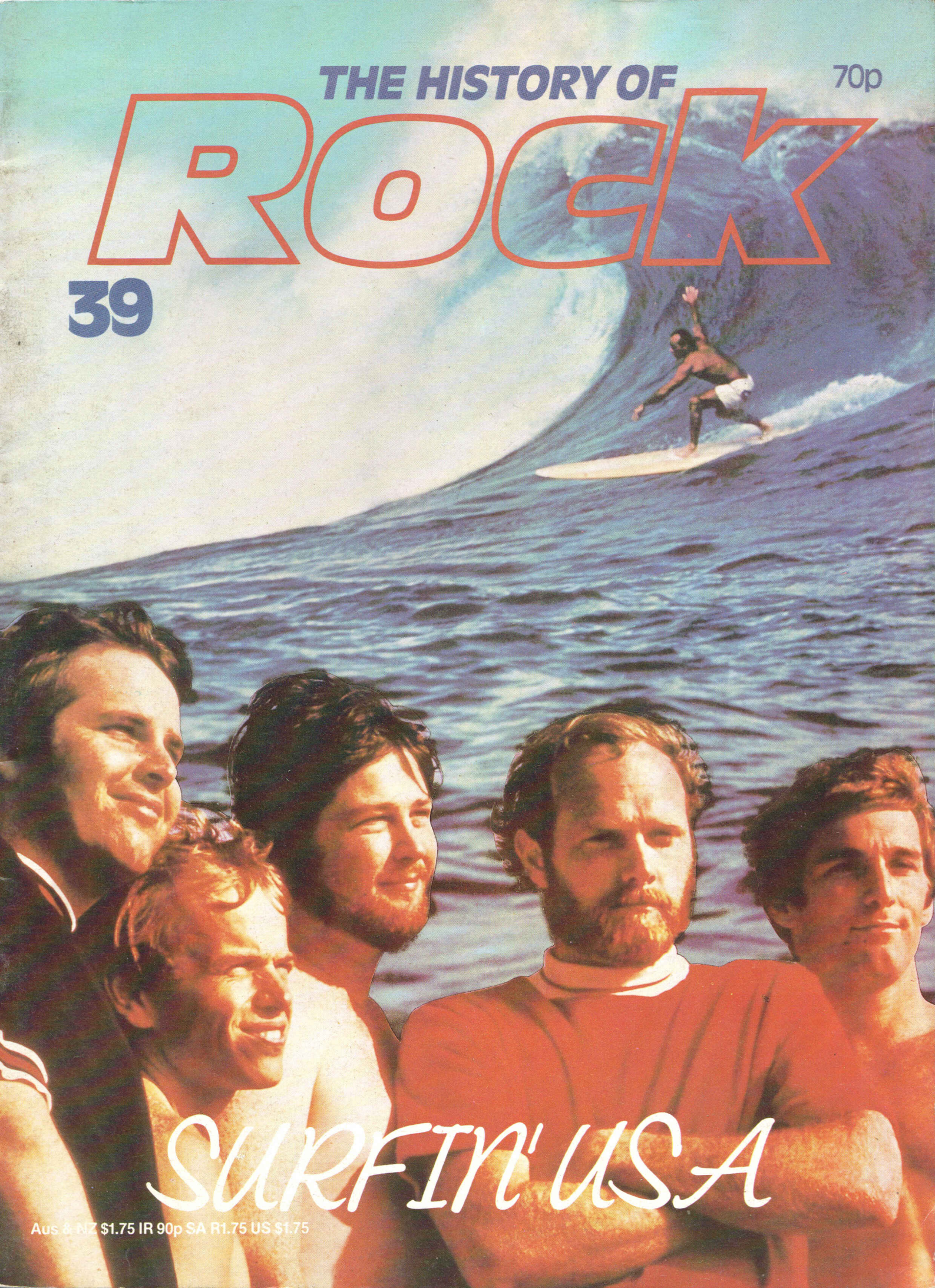

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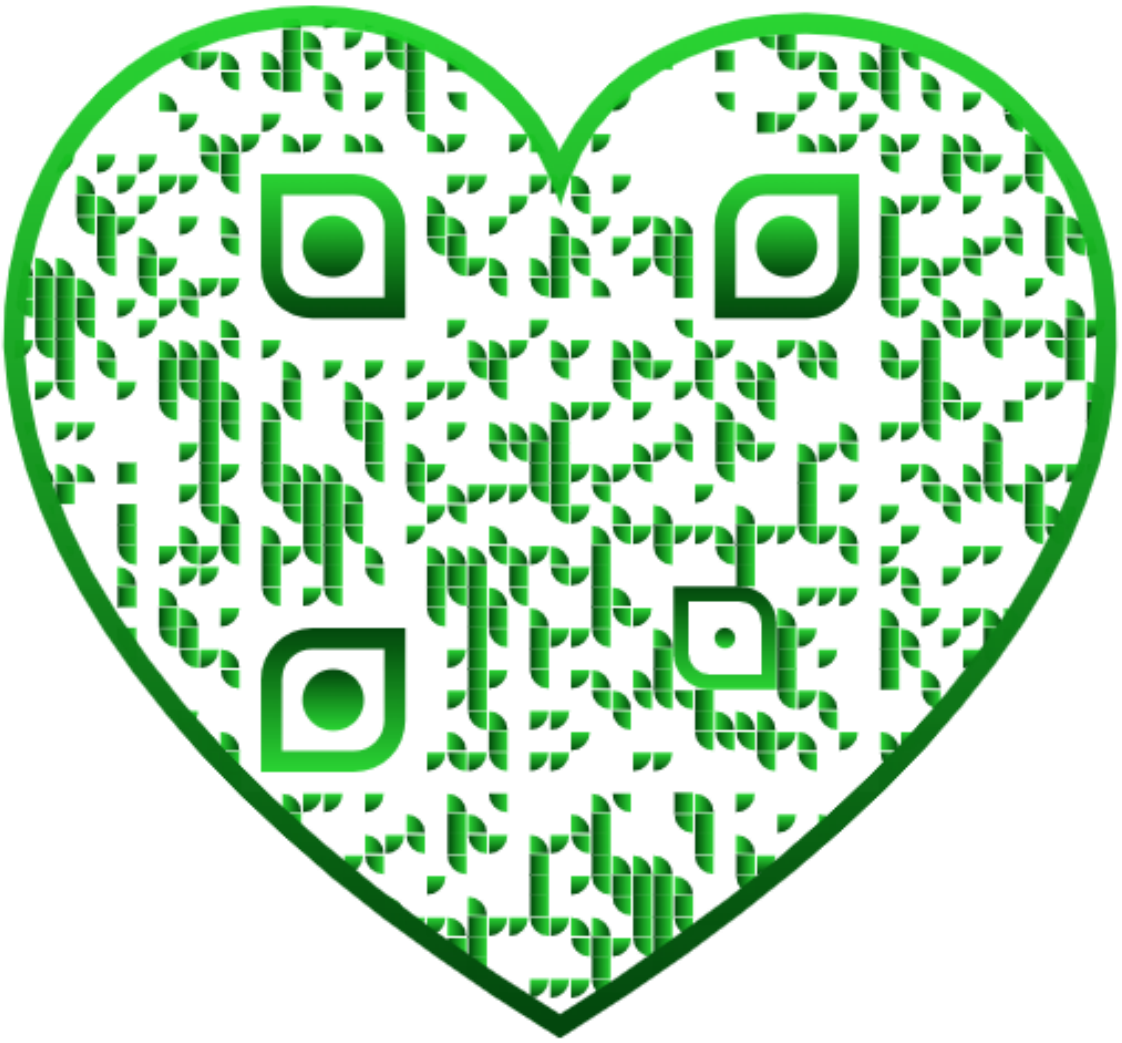

THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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No single figure more readily personifies the musical and sociological development of postwar black America than James Brown. Since his first break in 1956 with the million-selling 'Please, Please, Please', Brown has notched scores of hits, many of which have reflected the growing pride and awareness of black youth. Perhaps his only rival as spokesman-in-song was Curtis Mayfield, whose work with the Impressions created almost as many milestones.

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All Summer Long

The timeless magic of the Beach Boys' harmonies

THE EMERGENCE of the Beach Boys in the early Sixties proved crucial in focusing attention on California as the new breeding ground for affluent teenage groups, celebrating a rich and carefree lifestyle. The Beach Boys swiftly established themselves as an American institution and their songs of sun-kissed California girls and endless summer days and nights captured the imagination of a record-buying public. Their achievement was enormous. No other pop artists produced such optimistic music, and it is a tribute to the strength of their songs that they still conjure up powerful images of California in the Sixties.

Even today, the visual image most closely associated with the Beach Boys is that of five suntanned young men in striped shirts, confidently clutching surf boards on a sunlit beach, the epitome of happy teenagers. For the Beach Boys were a safe group. Like their rivals, the Beatles, they were loved by young and old, and while wallowing in teenage self-indulgence and placing a disproportionate emphasis on the importance of surfing, hot-rodding and girl-watching, the group also upheld conservative values and like over-protective parents urged their fans to 'Be True To Your School'. More importantly, they were a family with an authoritarian father cast in the role of manager. More than any group before or since they upheld the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant American lifestyle. In their glorification of relaxed, acceptable teenage life in the Golden State, it is no wonder that the Beach Boys are so often credited as the creators of a Californian myth.

Beat and doo-wop

What the Beach Boys managed to do was to put the rhythmic excitement of Chuck Berry-style rock'n'roll and instrumental surf music together with the close harmonies of doo-wop. They would not have achieved this without the recordings of Dick Dale and the instrumental surf groups; but equally they could not have arrived at their sound without the refinement of harmony vocals that was taking place in the early Sixties. It is noticeable, for example, that the Four Seasons had their first Number 1 hit the month before the Beach Boys had their first national Top Twenty entry.

The Wilson brothers and friends had a range that no other mid-Sixties American group could match, however. They expressed the nuances of teenage emotions far better than any save their British competitors. And although they sang of possessions and activities that seemed specific to California, the emotions were so well expressed that they exerted a far wider appeal. The Beach Boys could move from the jokey, light drive of 'Fun, Fun, Fun' to the introspection of 'In My Room', from the puzzled anticipation of 'When I Grow Up' to the sheer joy in life of 'I Get Around'. None of the sources from which they borrowed elements of their style – Chuck Berry, black doo-woppers like the Platters, white harmony groups like the Williams Brothers – could rival this breadth; and very few of them could match the sometimes breathtaking impact of the songs.

The Beach Boys were adequate musicians but very talented singers, and Brian Wilson

The Beach Boys (below) may have walked on water, but the Californian idyll projected by their music was tinged from the outset with nostalgia, and songwriter Brian Wilson was to plunge deeper and deeper into introspection as the years went by.

combined the elements superbly. The harmonising voices would suddenly come in at a crucial point, making the maximum effect. The contrast between the thin lead voice singing the first verse of 'Fun, Fun, Fun' and the harmonies on the chorus is a case in point; on 'Wendy', from the LP *All Summer Long*, the short, hesitant instrumental introduction is the perfect foil to the glorious vocal entry.

But the music was much more than just the effective use of vocal stylings. They developed an instrumental sound that matched the smoothness of the harmonies. The early surfing records had the standard sound of teen-idol pop – scratchy guitar and tinny drums – but by 1964, when 'I Get Around' became the Beach Boys' first Number 1, the backings were very different. Brian Wilson had begun to produce a rich but percussive sound on his Fender Jazz bass and to complement this the drum sound became heavier and flatter, but with echo judiciously added when the song warranted it. There was less rhythm guitar in the mix, but keyboards were increasingly prominent. Tone colours were very important – the use of bass guitar and the bells of the cymbals at the beginning of 'California Girls', for example – and Wilson often added extra instrumentation such as the flute on 'Sloop John B', but other sounds fitted less well. Mike Love sometimes played saxophone, but the harsh, raucous sounds of the instrument were always put well down in the mix. The whole effect was a smooth, incandescent confection. Perfect doo-wop set to perfect instrumental backings.

Living on fantasies

The triumph and the tragedy of the Beach Boys is that they were ultimately trapped within this sound. Neither the public nor their record company, Capitol, wished them to grow up and even at the height of their creative powers they were still performing a medley of Beach Boys greatest hits. And this sound became part of the myth of the perfect, California lifestyle. Myth has always been more important than reality in the rock business and the Beach Boys thrived on their own fantasies. Their early hits centred almost entirely on surfing, with titles such as 'Surfin'', 'Surfin' Safari', 'Surfin' USA' and 'Surfer Girl'. The twin obsession with hot-rodding was also demonstrated on albums such as *Little Deuce Coupe*. The irony, of course, was that only one of the fun-loving Beach Boys actually *could* surf, and the group's mastermind, Brian Wilson, apparently suffered from aquaphobia. And when Wilson tried to move away from novelty songs he initially met resistance from his public, his record company and even his fellow members.

Yet Wilson was determined to change and he did succeed in his desire to produce more adventurous work. Trying to surpass the achievement of producer Phil Spector and emulate the worldwide success of the Beatles, he developed the Beach Boys' music by adapting Spector's 'wall of sound' technique. Wilson produced astonishingly complex arrangements, boasting multi-layered harmonies previously unheard in the pop world of the Sixties. Without altering the essence of the Beach Boys' sound Wilson transformed them into one of the most adventurous musical units of the decade. *Pet Sounds* was greeted with critical acclaim, though the US sales left much to be desired. By Christmas 1966, however, the brilliant 'Good Vibrations' had elevated Wilson to the stature of Lennon/McCartney. The song fully demonstrated the Beach Boys' ability to produce great music, compelling in its immediacy, yet revealing something new and undiscovered on each successive hearing. It was on the strength of such songs as 'God Only Knows' and 'Good Vibrations' that the Beach Boys toppled the Beatles as the world's top group in the influential *New Musical Express* poll. Their future as a creative and commercial group looked assured.

End of the fun

Unfortunately, in their attempts to bury one image the Beach Boys fell victim to another media myth that proclaimed 'Brian Wilson is a genius'. The pressures placed upon Wilson to repeat the brilliant success of 'Good Vibrations' proved stifling. The equally adventurous 'Heroes And Villains' was delayed for months and, as a result, its chart success was severely lessened. Even more alarmingly, the much touted *Smile*, reputedly the Beach Boys' equivalent of the Beatles' *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, failed to appear through internal disputes over musical policy.

By the late Sixties the Beach Boys' critical and commercial fortunes had foundered and they seemed incapable of recapturing the brilliance of *Pet Sounds* or the huge sales of their earlier work. Scorned by the emerging San Francisco psychedelic movement for their conservatism, they were simultaneously being promoted by Capitol Records as a surfing group. The critics continued to mourn the loss of Brian Wilson as a creative genius while the public required the group to remain locked in a Sixties time warp and re-run the old hits.

To their credit, the Beach Boys frequently threatened to re-emerge as a major musical force during the Seventies; but the myth they had created consistently thwarted them. With Carl Wilson assuming the role of leader, the group looked set to reach new heights as a progressive Seventies band. The 1973 album, *Holland*, confirmed their arrival as one of the more interesting bands of the new decade, but the work was severely underrated and inevitably criticised in comparison to earlier achievements such as *Pet Sounds*. Instead of building a new career, the Beach Boys found themselves haunted by the ghost of Brian Wilson, whose comeback was frequently forecast as the decade progressed.

The unprecedented success of their compilation albums in the Seventies indicated the continuing appeal of Beach Boys music, a style that originally grew from the short-lived novelty of surfing and hot rods. Brian Wilson's songs, like those of Buddy Holly, are period pieces that somehow retain a universal relevance many years on. The Beach Boys will always be remembered as the quintessential California group, but underlying their enormous success is a tragic sense of loss, an inability to escape from the style that made them what they were.

JOHNNY ROGAN

Inset right: Mike Love (standing left), Brian Wilson (standing right), Dennis Wilson (seated left), David Marks (seated centre) and Carl Wilson (seated right). Inset centre: The group with Al Jardine (on the left) replacing Marks. Inset far right: Bruce Johnston (on the right) replaced Brian Wilson in 1965. Below: Apart from Dennis, none of the band were actually surfers.

SURF'S UP

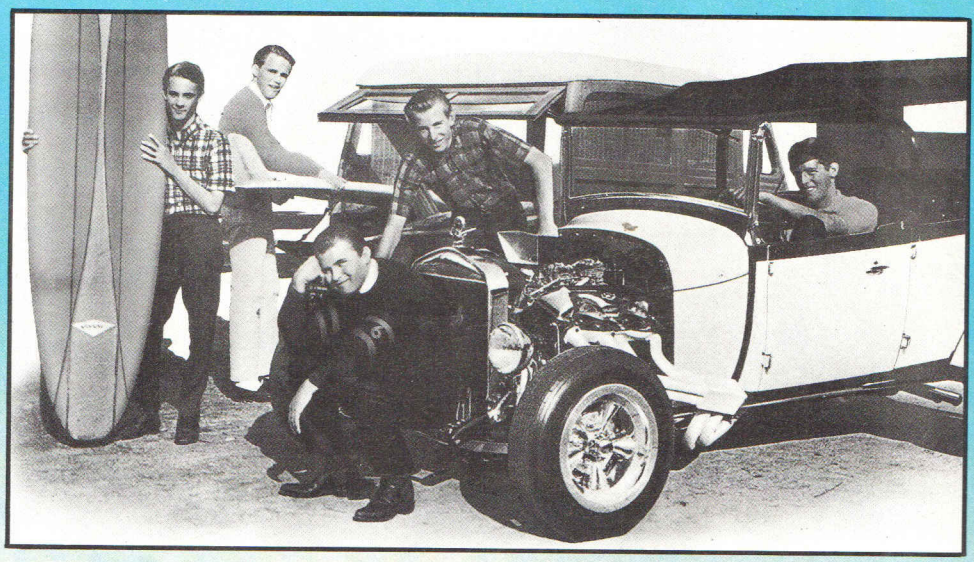
Sun, sand and a new West Coast sound

A PRODUCT of the unique climate and social conditions of Southern California, surf music – despite the international successes of the Beach Boys and Jan and Dean with surfing songs – always remained an essentially California phenomenon. Although the two aforementioned vocal outfits are remembered as the genre's leading exponents, it was at root a largely instrumental musical form – a dance music that attempted to capture in sound the carefree spirit of California's beach lifestyle, and the tension and excitement of riding the board itself.

Surfer's Stomp

The instrumental surf style evolved directly from the mode of instrumental rock'n'roll that was strongly in vogue in 1959 and 1960. At a time when rock'n'roll had lost much of its excitement, with the scene dominated by sanitised teen idols, a new generation of high school and garage bands were turning for their inspiration to the raunchy instrumental dance music popularised by Duane Eddy and Johnny and the Hurricanes. One-off rock instrumental hits became legion in the charts as one or another of these bands got its brief lucky break, and every new hit added to the nationwide band repertoire. On the California coast, instrumental bands tended to play at beach-side clubs and ballrooms where the basic audience was the young surfing set. One such group was the Deltones, fronted by guitarist Dick Dale, whose musical sound and approach was to have an immense impact on virtually every young band in Southern California.

Of any musician, Dick Dale has the strongest claim to having invented surf music. Through staccato picking on a Fender Stratocaster, heavy use of reverberation and a pounding rhythm behind, he created a sound that captured for him the same vibration as riding the surf. 'There was a tremendous amount of power



that I felt while surfing,' he recalled in 1975, 'and that feeling of power was simply transferred from myself into my guitar.' This new sound became hugely popular among Californian coast audiences who packed Dale's regular ballroom dates to capacity, turning him into one of the Golden State's top live attractions.

A host of emulators sprang up, as instrumental combos honed their style towards what soon became a recognisable 'surf sound': pounding drums, frequent latin tinges in rhythm and percussion – Dick Dale himself admitted some latin influences, and there was a strong Chicano presence among the ranks of the musicians – with everything focusing on the reverb or echo of the lead guitar.

The strength of this scene grew rapidly to the stage where local 'battles of the surfing bands' became regular weekend features, and the bands themselves developed such a level of local following that a large, independent record industry mushroomed to put them on record. Hundreds of records were pressed in comparatively small numbers on scores of labels from around 1961 until the genre began to die out in 1965 in the face of the British invasion. Tunes such as 'Moon Dawg' (the Gamblers), 'Church Key' (the Revels), 'Mr Moto' (the Bel-Airs), and 'Latinia' (the Sentinels) sold in quantity along the California coast and particularly strong local sellers were often picked up by larger labels. One or two of these items even began to make minor showings on the national charts.

On the crest of the surfing wave, a few California acts like the Chantays (top left) and Dick Dale (above) enjoyed brief national success. In its wake came the craze for hot-rod music – celebrated, among others, by the Surfaris (above left).

The first sizeable national impact by a surf instrumental was made by the Mar-Kets' 'Surfer's Stomp' (originally on Union and leased to Liberty) which reached Number 31 on *Billboard*'s Hot Hundred early in 1962. Dick Dale himself had made Number 60 the previous year with 'Let's Go Trippin'' on his own Del-Tone label, and on the strength of this was signed by Capitol. However, he never managed to come up with the right material for a big hit and a Number 98 with 'The Scavenger' in 1963 was his only other chart placing.

From waves to wheels

Capitol, however, were to find success with the Beach Boys, who had come together in the wake of the instrumental boom. The Beach Boys' winning innovation was the addition of surfing lyrics to the music. Other bands used vocals but only on familiar rock standards to pad out the surf repertoire. Brian Wilson, however, began writing songs which celebrated not only surfing itself, but the young Californian lifestyle as a whole – much the same approach that Chuck Berry had taken with his teen-angled lyrics of the mid Fifties.

Songs like 'Surfin' Safari', 'Surfer Girl' and 'Shut Down' were inevitably far easier for a non-California audience to relate to than simple instrumental evocations of surfing, and the Beach Boys' style was soon taken up by other acts from Los Angeles and elsewhere.

A whole new genre began to develop with the Beach Boys' music as its roots – a harmonic vocal surf style with youth, beach and car lyrics. Erstwhile white doo-woppers Jan and Dean jumped wholeheartedly into the style – and into the national charts with Brian Wilson's 'Surf City', the first surf-oriented Number 1 in 1963. Also into the charts with similar sounds went the Rip Chords with 'Hey Little Cobra', Ronny and the Daytonas (actually from Nashville) with 'G.T.O.', the Hondells with 'Little Honda' and many more.

Two bands from the original instrumental scene did manage to break through nationally, however – admittedly with only one major hit apiece, but in each case with a record so memorable that both became classics. These were the Chantays with the innovative, bubbling 'Pipeline', and the Surfaris with the best-known surf guitar raver of all, 'Wipe Out'. Both were Top Five US hits in 1963 and sold well all around the world, but they failed to guarantee long-term success for the groups involved. The Chantays quickly returned to obscurity, and though the Surfaris went on to record for a couple of years their only other visit to the US Top Twenty was when 'Wipe Out' itself was re-released in the summer of 1966.

Bustin' surfboards

Less memorable surf instrumental hits came from the (bald-headed) Pyramids with 'Penetration', the Rumblers with 'Boss', the Tornadoes with 'Bustin' Surfboards' and the Astronauts with 'Baja'. Rock instrumentalists who had established themselves before the surf boom muscled in on the surf sound too, in attempts to regain chart listing. The Ventures recorded a reasonably successful album, *Surfin'*, which was packed with cover versions of existing popular surf instrumentals; Duane Eddy fared more miserably with 'Your Baby's Gone Surfin'', which could only reach Number 93 in 1963. Eddy's studio colleague, Al Casey, did rather better that year reaching Number 48 with 'Surfin' Hootenanny' (a pastiche of guitar styles that included an impressive imitation of Dick Dale), as did Phil Spector's arranger Jack Nitszche, who took the evocative 'The Lonely Surfer' to Number 39.

Towards the end of 1963, the vocal surf groups began turning their attention away from water sport towards hot rods and drag racing, although the music itself remained identical. However, once the Beach Boys began to turn their attention towards more general celebrations of youth lifestyle like 'Fun, Fun, Fun', 'I Get Around' and 'California Girls' in 1964-65, the sound of surf ebbed away.

Then, in the mid Sixties, the British invasion brought a new breed of Californian bands who tried to emulate the sounds of England. Although on the coast people still surfed as much as before, they no longer celebrated the activity in music. Nevertheless, the early Eighties saw a popular revival of the original surfing sound in California, which seems to prove that, in its home at least, the surf heritage never really died.

BARRY LAZELL

Surf music
Recommended Listening

Summer Means Fun (Capitol CGB1009) (Includes: Surfin' USA – the Beach Boys; Surfer's Stomp – the Mar-Kets; Surfin' Down The Swanee River – the Honeys; Ride The Wild Surf – Jan and Dean; Summer Means Fun – Fantastic Baggys; Pamela Jean – the Survivors). *Shutdown* (Capitol CAPS1018) (Includes: Scatter Shield – the Surfaris; Little Deuce Coupe – the Beach Boys; Hot Rod High – Super Stocks; Pipeline – the Chantays; Dracula's Deuce – the Ghouls; Death Valley Run – Kickstands). *Surfin' USA* (Pickwick SHM974) (Includes: Little Deuce Coupe – Jan and Dean; Little Honda – the Hondells; Surfin' Safari – the Beach Boys; Ride The Wild Surf – Jan and Dean; Wipe Out – the Surfaris).

DEAD MAN'S CURVE

The triumph and tragedy of Jan and Dean

TO CONSIDER Jan and Dean as merely another West Coast surfing outfit riding a wave in the wake of the Beach Boys' success of 1963 is to underestimate not only their talent but also their importance as catalysts in the emergence of Los Angeles as a musical capital. In the late Fifties, when Jan Berry and Dean Torrence were attending University High School in West Los Angeles, the city's main leisure industry was still television and the movies. Capitol Records, then recently purchased by EMI in Britain, was the area's leading record company, America's other majors being based in New York and Chicago. Capitol tended to concentrate on mainstream pop so the West Coast's only outlets for rock'n'roll were independent labels like Modern Records, Alladin, Imperial and Liberty. Then there were even smaller concerns which, in Dean's words, 'operated out of tents' and almost all of which concentrated purely on R&B.

Stripper Jennie

Jan (born 3 April 1941) and Dean (born 10 March 1940) became friends during their last year in high school when both played in the football team. In true rock'n'roll fashion, they and several other team members discovered that the showers provided great echo for harmonising to the doo-wop hits of the day. Eventually, the pair formed a group with school friend Arnie Ginsburg, Dean's neighbour Bruce Johnston on piano and another neighbour, Sandy Nelson, who played drums. Meanwhile, Jan had begun to experiment with a home tape-recorder in his garage, and in 1958 the group recorded a song, 'Jennie Lee', that had been inspired by a stripper with whom Arnie seemed to have become infatuated.

Shortly after, the group split up and Torrence joined the Army; but Berry took the 'Jennie Lee' tape to Joe Lubin who ran a minor label, Arwin, which was owned by Doris Day and her husband Marty Melcher. The number was released under the name Jan and Arnie and entered *Billboard*'s Hot Hundred in June of 1958. The record went on to reach Number 8, selling around 850,000 copies.

Jan and Arnie followed this surprise success with 'Gas Money', which peaked at Number 81; but a third single, 'I Love Linda', made no impression at all, so Ginsburg called it a day.

Dean, meanwhile, emerged from Army service, upset at having missed out on the brief taste of glory, as he later recalled: 'I was more hurt than pissed off about "Jennie Lee". It bothered me that I didn't get any credit. Luckily I didn't do anything about it; if I'd become heavy I probably never would have gotten another chance.' As it was, Jan contacted his old partner and the duo resumed operations.

Jan had recently made the acquaintance of Lou Adler and Herb Alpert, who were writing songs and recording together, and Adler gave the duo a song called 'Baby Talk'. This they recorded and subsequently placed with Dore Records, who had just gained a million-seller with the Teddy Bears' 'To Know Him Is To Love Him'. 'Baby Talk' charted in September of 1959, peaking at Number 10. On the strength of this hit, Jan and Dean appeared on 'American Bandstand' and recorded several more minor hits for Dore including 'We Go Together', 'Gee', and 'Clementine' – all in 1960.

By the end of the year, however, Lou Adler, who was by now managing the duo, had decided that Dore's resources were too limited and went out to find a larger label. The first approach was to Liberty with Jan and Dean's version of an old Hoagy Carmichael song, 'Heart And Soul'. But though the company were impressed by the singers, they were less than keen on the number. 'Heart And Soul' eventually appeared on Challenge Records and went to Number 25 in July 1961. Soon after, Jan and Dean signed to Liberty.

The first efforts for Liberty – 'A Sunday Kind Of Love' and 'Tennessee' – were only minor hits so, in order to try and recoup their initial investment, Liberty bought up the earlier Arwin, Dore and Challenge singles and put out a Greatest Hits package with a few new recordings included.

Riding the surf

By the early Sixties, surfing had become a major pastime among the youth of Los

Above left: Jan and Arnie with their hit single 'Jennie Lee'. Below: Dean Torrence (right) singing with Mike Love of the Beach Boys. Right: Jan and Dean in their heyday. Above right: In the Seventies, after Jan Berry's remarkable recovery.

Angeles and the surrounding area, so much so that groups like Dick Dale and the Deltones – pioneers of the surf instrumental sound – and the Beach Boys were setting surf themes to music. Jan and Dean, keen participators in the sport, found themselves being supported at local gigs by such groups and were eager to record surf music too.

Before they could start, however, they were sidetracked by the emergence of the Four Seasons and, hoping to emulate their success, recorded 'Linda', a song which, as Dean Torrence recalled, 'was a direct steal of the Four Seasons'. This reached Number 28 and sold around 400,000 copies, after which Liberty granted them an album budget.

'Surf City' celebration

Still wishing to explore the possibilities of surf music, they decided, on Lou Adler's advice, to blend the success of 'Linda' with the sound of the new genre and cut an LP titled *Jan And Dean Take Linda Surfin'*. The only problem was that, according to Torrence, 'We didn't know any [surf] songs except two Beach Boys hits.' These were 'Surfin'' and 'Surfin' Safari' so Jan and Dean invited Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys to collaborate on cover versions of the two numbers. They also asked Brian for more songs, but all he had to offer was the line: 'Two girls for every boy.' Between the three of them, this line grew into the song 'Surf City', which was to reach Number 1 and sell over a million copies worldwide.

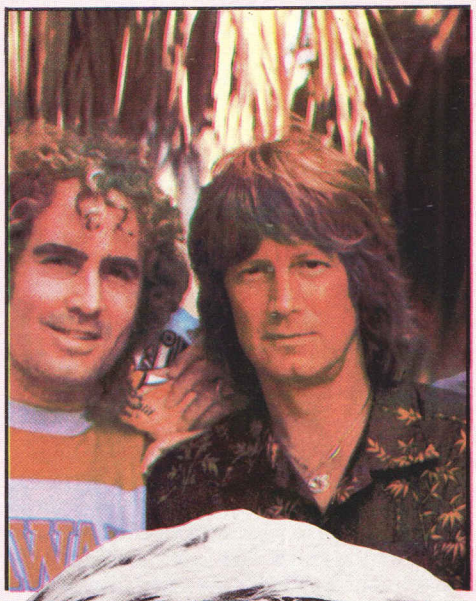
This success put Jan and Dean, and Los Angeles in general, on the musical map. As the surf music scene took off, studios and labels started to thrive and the nucleus of professional session musicians, who would serve the needs of Californian pop throughout the Sixties, began to form. Jan and Dean's breakthrough also served to establish the name of Lou Adler within the rock industry.

While many of their contemporaries were crushed by the British invasion in the mid Sixties, Jan and Dean managed to consolidate the success of 'Surf City' and their popularity remained virtually unaffected by the English threat. From the middle of 1963 to July 1966, they enjoyed nine consecutive Top Forty hits, including Top Ten entries with 'Drag City', 'Dead Man's Curve' and 'The Little Old Lady (From Pasadena)'. But although they, along with the Beach Boys, kept the spirit of surf and Californian sun alive throughout 1963 and 1964, they felt a need for change by the time protest and folk-rock arrived on the scene.

While the Beach Boys moved on to the experimentation of *Pet Sounds* and *Smiley Smile*, Jan and Dean recorded *Folk And Roll* and other rather unsuccessful attempts to escape the surf/hot rod genre in which they had become immersed. Then in early 1966, while filming *Easy Come, Easy Go*, Jan Berry crashed his Stingray into the back of a stationary truck, causing head injuries that he was lucky to survive. The crash was an almost symbolic end to four years of song about the lifestyle of Southern California.

Following the accident, Dean attempted to go it alone but, without his partner, he soon grew despondent and eventually formed Kittyhawk Graphics, designing covers for other artists' albums. Jan Berry made a remarkable recovery, however, and in 1973 he and Dean appeared at a surf revival concert at the Hollywood Palladium, billing themselves as the Legendary Masked Surfers (though, due to Jan's condition, they were unable to sing, lip-synching instead). By the late Seventies, however, Jan and Dean were able to make occasional live appearances, often backed by local surf revivalists Papa Du Run Da Run, singing their old hits and re-awakening the spirit of Californian sun and fun.

BOB FISHER



Jan and Dean
Recommended Listening

Ride The Wild Surf (United Artists UAS2987) (Includes: Surf City, Summer Means Fun, Drag City, Honolulu Lulu, Sidewalk Surfin', Bucket T.).
The Jan And Dean Story (Creole PAST1) (Includes: Dead Man's Curve, Help Me Rhonda, Little Deuce Coupe, Fun, Fun, Fun, Little Old Lady From Pasadena, I Get Around).

BEACH BOYS DIARY

1941
15 March Mike Love born.

1942
20 June Brian Wilson born.
3 September Alan Jardine born.

1944
4 December Dennis Wilson born.

1946
21 December Carl Wilson born.

1961
The group are formed as first the Pendletones and then Kenny and the Cadets. Brian and Mike write a song called 'Surfin'' and the group are re-named the Beach Boys.
December 'Surfin'' is released on the Candix label.
31 December The group play their first live date as the Beach Boys at the Long Beach Municipal Auditorium.

1962
24 March 'Surfin'' reaches Number 75 in *Billboard*'s Hot Hundred. Alan Jardine leaves the group soon after and returns to college. He is replaced by David Marks but returns to the line-up in the summer of 1963.
June The group are signed by Capitol.
October 'Surfin' Safari', the first Capitol release, peaks at Number 14.
November The Beach Boys' first album, *Surfin' Safari*, is released.

1963
4 March 'Surfin' USA' is released and peaks at Number 3 in the US in May; it goes on to sell more than a million copies worldwide.
25 March The second album, *Surfin' USA*, is issued and climbs to Number 2 in the album charts in July.
23 September The first Brian Wilson-produced album, *Surfer Girl*, is released.
21 October *Little Deuce Coupe* released.

1964
4 July 'I Get Around' becomes the group's first US Number 1; in the UK it makes the Top Ten.
October The Beach Boys release two more albums – *Christmas Album* and their first US Number 1 album success, *Beach Boys Concert*.
1 November The group arrive in the UK for radio and television appearances only.
3 November They appear live on 'Ready, Steady, Go!' singing 'I Get Around', 'When I Grow Up' and their forthcoming US single 'Dance, Dance, Dance'.
7 December Brian suffers a breakdown while flying from Los Angeles to Houston. He subsequently quits the touring group and concentrates on writing and production.

1965
January Glen Campbell replaces Brian for stage appearances.
9 April Bruce Johnston replaces Glen Campbell to become a fully-fledged Beach Boy.
29 May 'Help Me Rhonda' reaches Number 1 in the US.
5 July *Summer Days (And Summer Nights)* album is released.
8 November *Beach Boys Party* album is released; it includes 'Barbara Ann', a duet by Brian Wilson and Dean Torrence.

1966
January The Beach Boys tour Japan, and Brian begins work on *Pet Sounds*.
7 March The first Beach Boy solo single, 'Caroline No' by Brian, is released.
16 May *Pet Sounds* is released in the US but makes little impact; in the UK, however, the album peaks at Number 2.
November The Beach Boys embark on their first major tour of Great Britain and play to ecstatic audiences.
19 November 'Good Vibrations' becomes the group's first UK Number 1 and their fourth Top Three hit of the year, following 'Barbara Ann', 'Sloop John B' and 'God Only Knows'; in December it becomes their third US Number 1.

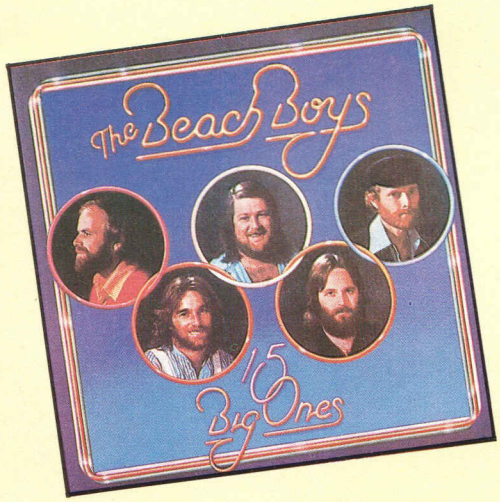
1967
At the beginning of the year Brian works on the follow-up to *Pet Sounds* – the ill-fated *Smile*.
April Impatient for a new UK single, Capitol put out 'Then I Kissed Her' from the *Summer Days* LP; it subsequently makes the Top Five.
24 July The long-awaited follow-up to 'Good Vibrations', 'Heroes And Villains', is released in the US on the group's own Brother label.
18 September *Smiley Smile* album, the first with production credit given to all the Beach Boys, is released.
December The Beach Boys play at a UNICEF concert in Paris, where they meet Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and are introduced to Transcendental Meditation.
18 December Release of *Wild Honey*.

1968
May The group tour with the Maharishi but the concerts are poorly attended.
24 June Release of *Friends*, an album heavily influenced by TM.
31 August 'Do It Again', a return to the early Beach Boys sound, gives the group their second UK Number 1.
1 December The group appear at the London Palladium during their third UK tour.

1969
3 February The group release what is to be their last album of new material for Capitol, *20/20*.
May At a press conference Brian announces that the group are 'pretty low on money'. With just one single owing to Capitol they would soon be looking for a new label.
16 June 'Break Away', the last new single for Capitol, is released in the US; it achieves only moderate success but reaches Number 6 in the UK.

1970
January The group sign with Warner Brothers, who agree to distribute the Beach Boys' Brother label.
31 August *Sunflower*, the first album on Reprise/Brother, is released.
Autumn Jack Rieley becomes manager of the group.
October The group steal the show at the Big Sur Folk Festival.
November Triumphant appearances at the Whiskey A-Go-Go in Los Angeles, with Brian making a temporary return to live shows.
4 December Dennis Wilson releases his first solo single, 'Sound Of Free', in Europe only.

1971
24 February The group's Carnegie Hall concert in New York is a sell-out and receives rave reviews.
27 April A concert with the Grateful



Dead at the Fillmore East in New York is hugely successful.
30 August *Surf's Up* is released; the album contains what many consider to be the last great Brian Wilson song, "Til I Die'.

1972
Early in the year two more Beach Boys are recruited – guitarists Blondie Chaplin and drummer Ricky Fataar; Bruce Johnston makes an amicable departure after seven years with the group.
May Another successful UK visit includes appearances at the Royal Festival Hall in London. The group also plays at the Lincoln Festival and at London's Crystal Palace, where they are joined on stage by Keith Moon and Elton John.
June The Beach Boys move to Holland and begin building their own studio; all equipment is flown from America. Total costs run into hundreds of thousands of dollars – and just to record one album.

1973
8 January Release of *Holland*; each LP is accompanied by an EP, *Mount Vernon And Fairway (A Fairy Tale)*, written by Brian.
Spring Manager Jack Rieley is fired; Mike Love's brother Steve replaces him.
4 June Murry Wilson dies of a heart attack.
19 November *The Beach Boys In Concert* live double-album is released and is the first of their Warner Brothers LPs to go gold.

1974
5 October *Endless Summer*, a Capitol double-album of greatest hits, becomes the group's second Number 1 album in the US. Blondie Chaplin and Ricky Fataar quit the group soon after; Dennis returns to drums and Chicago producer James Guercio augments the band on bass.

1975
14 April Following the success of *Endless Summer*, Capitol issue another double-album of early material, *Spirit Of America*, which sails into the *Billboard* Top Ten.
21 June The group play at Wembley Stadium and receive a thunderous reception.
Brian Wilson signs a production deal with Equinox Records, run by Terry Melcher and Bruce Johnston.

1976
24 May 'Rock And Roll Music' is released and later gives the group their first US Top Ten hit for a decade.
June In the UK, EMI issue *Beach Boys 20 Golden Greats*, which spends 10 weeks at the top of the album charts.
2 July Brian returns to the stage line-up at Oakland, California.
5 July Release date of *15 Big Ones*, the first Brian Wilson-produced Beach Boys album for 10 years.
5 August A 15th anniversary TV special, 'The Beach Boys: It's OK', is broadcast on NBC-TV in the US.

1977
1 April The group sign with Caribou Records.
16 September The first solo album from a group member, *Pacific Ocean Blue* by Dennis Wilson, is released.

1978
The group spend most of the year apart.
3 April Title song from the film *Almost Summer*, written by Brian, Mike and Al, is released by the group Celebration, featuring Mike Love.
25 September *M.I.U. Album* is released; it is the Beach Boys' final album for Warner Brothers.

1979
13 February Release of 'Here Comes The Night', their first disc on the Caribou label (a subsidiary of Columbia).
16 March *L.A. (Light Album)* is released.
1 June 'Lady Lynda', extracted from *L.A. (Light Album)*, gives the group their first UK Top Ten single since 'Cottonfields' in 1970.

1980
6-7 June The Beach Boys play two nights at the Wembley Arena.

20 June They top the bill at the Knebworth Festival.
4 July The group play in front of half a million people at a free concert in Washington DC.

1981
27 March Carl Wilson releases his first solo album and leaves the group to tour with his own Carl Wilson Band. Englishman Adrian Baker is called in to fill out the live sound.
27 July Capitol Records put together a 'Beach Boys Medley' and the group have their first US Top Twenty hit for five years.
8 October After recording two unissued solo albums, Mike Love becomes the third Beach Boy to release a solo album – entitled *Looking Back With Love*. Mike later tours with his own group, the Endless Summer Beach Band.

1982
February Mike Love visits the UK and records with Adrian Baker. In the US, the Beach Boys have another Top Twenty hit with 'Come Go With Me'.
April Carl Wilson returns to the line-up.

MIKE GRANT

Good Vibrations

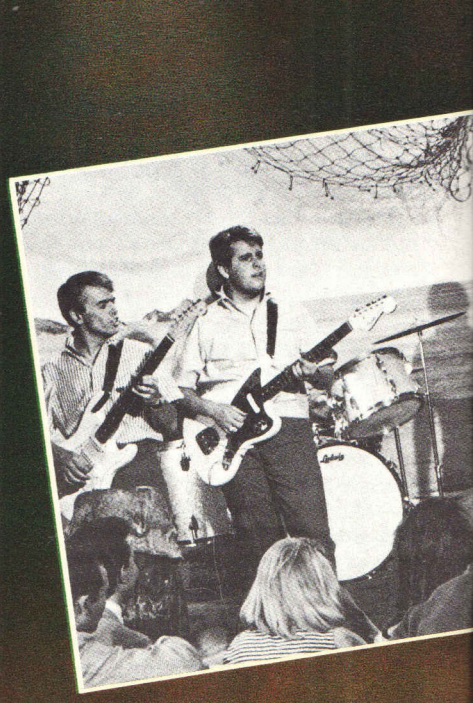
Optimism was the key to the Beach Boys' sound

In the Sixties, California was by far the most prosperous state in America and, arguably, the most exciting – if you were young. The cultural image California presented to the world was a healthy hedonism of youthful and golden success, an uncomplicated world of sand, surf, beach parties, hot rods, beach buggies and beautiful girls. The group that best represented this world – and even helped create it – was the Beach Boys.

The origins of the Beach Boys can be traced back to the early friendship of Brian Wilson (born 20 June 1942) with his cousin Michael Love (born 15 March 1941), brought about by their shared interest in harmony singing. This mutual enthusiasm was turned into action when Brian brought in his two younger brothers, Dennis (born 4 December 1944) and Carl (born 21 December 1946) who, with close friend Alan Jardine (born 3 September 1942), formed the vocal group that were to become the Beach Boys. Very much a family business, the group were kept under the tight control of the Wilsons' father, Murry, who acted as manager until being sacked in 1964; Mike Love's brother Steve, a graduate in business administration, handled their finances.

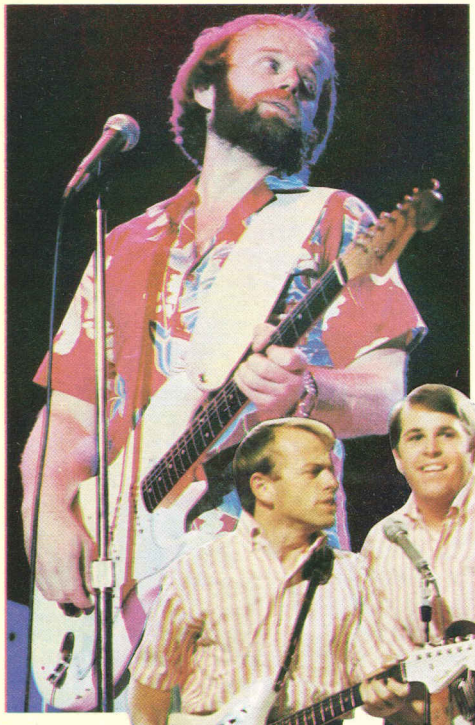
The group got going in earnest in the autumn of 1961 when instruments were procured, with Dennis on drums, Carl playing lead guitar, and Mike Love sharing lead singing duties with Brian, the bass guitarist. Al Jardine – who was briefly replaced while at college by David Marks in 1962 – played rhythm guitar. All were confident, interlocking singers.

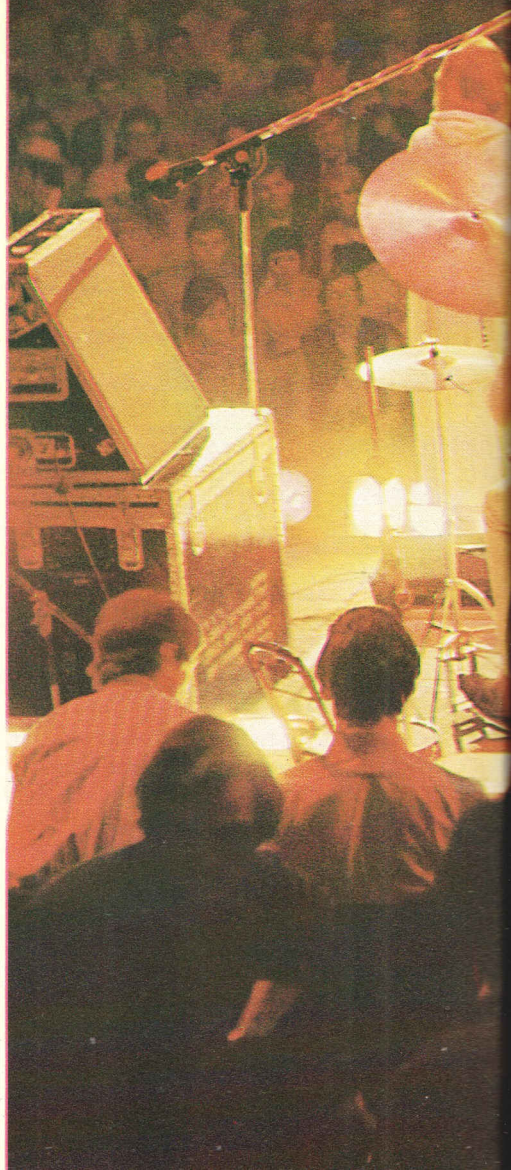
As Murry Wilson had a background in the music business he was a useful asset to the group in the early days and got them their first deal with publisher Hite Morgan. Adopting the name the Beach Boys – following short spells as Carl and the Passions (resurrected as an LP title in 1972) and the Pendletones – they began their rise to the crest of the music business.

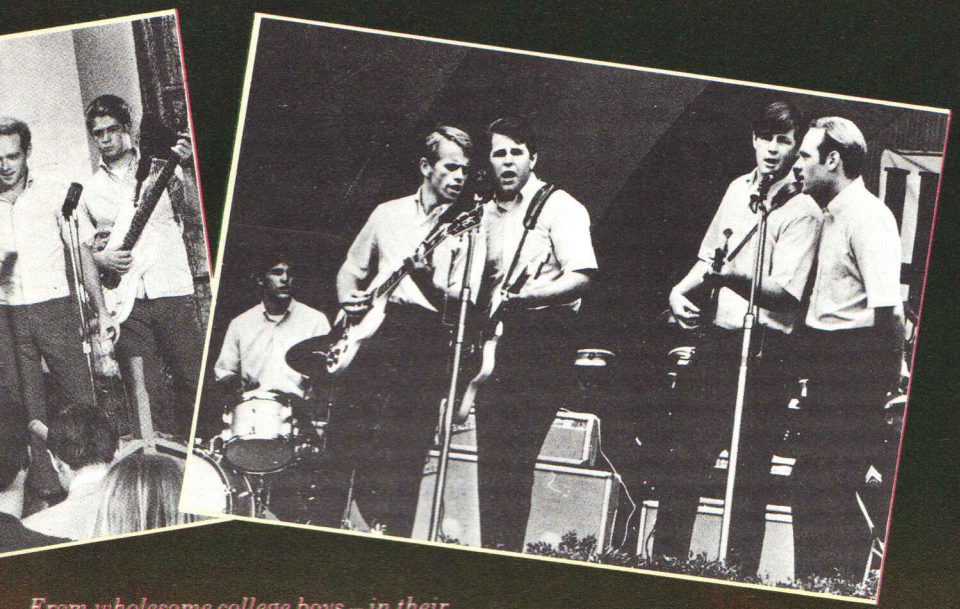


Surfing to success

The summer of 1962, like those before it, was notable for its musical fads and fashions. The previous year had brought the Twist, a dance craze with a strictly limited life; this time round it was surf music, and the Beach Boys were the early front-runners. With pop music widely considered a confidence trick to empty teenage pockets, manipulated by the moguls of the record industry, it was odds-on that the Beach Boys would have only a brief spell at the top when 'Surfin' Safari', their second release, swept to Number 14 in *Billboard*'s Hot Hundred in mid 1962. Yet that record – featuring







From wholesome college boys – in their 1965 movie Girls On The Beach *(above left) and their 1963 Hollywood Bowl concert (above right) – to Seventies megastars (below). Al Jardine (below far left) and Carl Wilson (below left) had, by then, abandoned the matching outfits of their early days (inset below left).*

Chuck Berry riffs, and embryonic high school harmonies mixed with a Fifties doo-wop style – contained the seeds for a long and adventurous career.

Back in the summer of 1962 the Beach Boys' unique sound could not miss. As Nik Cohn put it: 'Californians bought you out of patriotism and everyone else bought you for escape. The more golden your visions, the more sun-tanned your sound, the better you sold.' Nobody produced better golden visions than Brian Wilson, a chubby young man who had never been on a surfboard in his life. He was smart enough to realise that you couldn't go on singing about waves and wipe-outs forever, and created a follow-up fad from the surfer's allied passion for beach buggies and drag cars. Soon his eulogies to his 'Little Deuce Coupe' and 'Little Honda' had their place in the sun and the charts.

Wilson's rock'n'roll with a dream topping expressed California better than anything before or since, but when he drew upon his own experiences for songs, the results were altogether darker, as 'In My Room' (1963) showed: 'There's a world where I can go and tell my secrets to. In my room.' It was a startling contrast to songs about the pursuit of girls, suntans and T-birds in America's richest state. In the years to come, Wilson was to spend a lot of time in his room.

In those happy, carefree years in the early Sixties the Beach Boys seemed the embodiment of the American Dream and, more specifically, all that was good in California. They positively oozed success – and success in America was the biggest criterion of what was worthwhile.

The image they projected had the effect of masking the changes the Beach Boys, like mid-Sixties' youth in general, were going through. It was typical that the group's cover of Bob Dylan's 'The Times They Are A-Changin'', their first bow to the social unrest of the period, appeared on the light-hearted *Beach Boys Party* album in 1965.

Increasing tension

The Beach Boys – and particularly Brian – were changing fast, despite their clean image. The killing schedule set for pop stars of the early Sixties on the basis of a short chart lifetime took its toll on the group: on top of heavy touring and a dozen hit singles, they had already released no less than 11 albums by the end of 1965. On top of this workload, Brian had production and writing commitments with Jan and Dean, and had the worry of growing deaf in one ear. Little wonder, perhaps, that the group's most vital member blew a fuse.

Following his nervous breakdown in December 1964 Brian retired from performing live with the group in order to concentrate all his ideas and energies on an album. The result was one of rock's genuine masterpieces, *Pet Sounds*. The album took up the theme Brian had touched on in the 1964 hit 'When I Grow

Up', the loss of innocence and the disillusion that follows. The album opened with the bright radiance of 'Wouldn't It Be Nice' and worked its way through to the quiet resolution of 'Caroline No': the Beach Boys were leaving behind their dreamy future visions and facing reality.

This was May 1966, before *Revolver* let alone *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*; the world was hardly ready for a concept album from a pop group, yet the record's thematic simplicity has enabled it to outlast far flashier and more grandiose projects that were more highly praised at the time.

Pet Sounds was perhaps the last occasion when the eldest Wilson brother focused all his energy and talents on one project and saw it through. Brian's use of drugs was increasing rapidly and his creative urge diminished in proportion. His next work *Smile* was supposed to be set around the wider-ranging theme of the four elements.

Instead, building on the inspiration of 'God Only Knows', *Pet Sounds*' major track, the Beach Boys paid an album's worth of attention to their next two singles: 'Good Vibrations' and 'Heroes And Villains' were dazzling, elusive jigsaw puzzles that fitted into strange unheard-of patterns of sound. The more upbeat 'Good Vibrations' gave the group its first British Number 1 (and third in the States behind 1964's 'I Get Around' and the following year's 'Help Me Rhonda').

'Heroes And Villains' was not succesful to the same degree, perhaps because of the highly obscure lyrics by Van Dyke Parks. This was an apparent attempt at late Sixties' acid-rock credibility which could more easily have been achieved had Brian not turned down the opportunity to appear with the likes of the Who, Jimi Hendrix and Otis Redding at the Monterey Festival of 1967. But the group did end 1967 on a high note, following the patchy *Smiley Smile* – which included the salvaged remains of *Smile* – with the thoroughly engaging *Wild Honey*, which seemed to indicate, for the first time, that the group could survive Brian's diminished creativity. By this time, the group was simply 'produced by the Beach Boys' and most of the songs were credited to 'Wilson-Love', as if to mask Brian's withdrawal.

Life after Brian

Some of Brian Wilson's diminished horizons could be gained from his solo composition, 'Busy Doin' Nothin'', on the succeeding *Friends* album, a record of pleasant laziness that is said to be his favourite. The onus was on the other Beach Boys, and Brian's touring replacement, Bruce Johnston, to fill the gap. Following the disappointing *20/20* and a change of US label from Capitol to Reprise in 1970, it was the youngest Wilson, Carl, who showed most aptitude for the task.

Just 16 at the time of the group's first national hit, Carl had understandably been shy at pushing himself forward in the group's early days, though his guitar playing had become first-rate during the Sixties. But while the others were still adept at keeping the old Beach Boys cheerfulness going, as *Sunflower* demonstrated in 1970, it was tracks like Carl's 'Feel Flows' and 'Long Promised Road' (both co-written with manager Jack Rieley) that showed he could write with something of Brian's ability and that he had assimilated some of his production and arranging abilities.

Surf's Up, the 1972 follow-up to *Sunflower*, also showed a feeling for past and present, with Bruce Johnston's gorgeous, nostalgic 'Disney Girls (1957)' being balanced by Mike Love's surprisingly tough lyrics for 'Student Demonstration Time'. The album also reflected the Transcendental Meditation sessions the group had been heavily involved in; Love and Jardine went so far as to become TM instructors, and the others all used the techniques for lengthy periods.

All in all, *Surf's Up* seemed to point to a dignified future for the band amid the 'progressive rock' of the early Seventies. But not for the first or last time, the band followed an optimistic phase with an irritatingly bitty period. They took on two South Africans to augment the group; Blondie Chaplin and Ricky Fataar replaced Bruce Johnston and Dennis Wilson respectively, the latter temporarily absent through injury. This line-up released the haphazard *Carl And The Passions, So Tough,* which was notable for little apart from a lovely Brian Wilson-Jack Reiley rocker, 'Marcella'.

The democratic rationing of songs the group used in the early Seventies made for unpredictable results, sometimes suggesting that the members were heading in vastly different musical directions. *Holland*, made in Europe in 1972 at the suggestion of Reiley, was much better, however, and boasted two dreamily irresistible songs, 'Sail On Sailor' and 'The Trader', to balance out the pretentiousness of Mike Love's 'California Saga'.

Holland was followed by a long silence, broken only by a good live double-album; this, combined with their stunning appearance at London's Wembley Stadium in the summer of 1975, seemed to indicate a renewed enthusiasm for touring. Yet it was during this lull in new recorded output that the group curiously reached a pinnacle of critical and commercial acceptance. *Endless Summer*, a glorious compilation of the first five Brian-dominated years, was released in the States and became, to everyone's amazement, the first oldies record to top the charts there. The follow-up *Spirit Of America* did nearly as well. Clearly, there was a whole new audience for classic Beach Boys material, and the performing members seemed happy to fill the need and wait for brother Brian to be ready and willing to rejoin.

The gap lasted three years and the comeback record, released in 1976 complete with the line 'Produced by Brian Wilson', was *15 Big Ones*. But the record, far from being a step forward to a new era, proved to be merely an enjoyable re-tread of past musical influences, Chuck Berry, Spector and all. The hope then was that Brian was just getting back in the groove before attempting something new, but *Beach Boys Loves You* was in the same vein and *M.U.I. Album* reached an all-time low, reflecting the growing internal squabbles and sounding archaic.

Light and shade

Bruce Johnston was back as singer and producer in an attempt to unite the warring factions on *L.A. (Light Album)*, their first LP under a new 8½ million dollar contract with Columbia, and provided them with their biggest hit for nine years with the pseudo-classical 'Lady Lynda' in 1979. The album produced two other minor hits with 'Sumahama' and a dreadfull 11-minute disco version of 'Here Comes The Night' (originally off *Wild Honey),* apparently recorded with a total lack of enthusiasm by those group members participating (Brian didn't and neither did Mike Love). Unnoticed on the album was a two-minute-plus gem of an old Brian Wilson song, 'Good Timin'', the last classic Beach Boys nugget to appear.

Carl's criticisms of the group's attitude – being satisfied with the easy pickings through re-treads of old hits – were given added bite when he released a low-key solo album, *Carl Wilson*, with a lean punchy sound far superior to Johnston's modernisation attempts. He also issued an ultimatum to the group in 1981, saying that he would only rejoin full-time if the band recorded an album of new material and did proper rehearsals before touring.

Now that Carl's own manager, Jerry Schilling, has become the group's official manager (replacing Jim Guercio as chief outside influence), there is at least a hope that the worst of the squabbling is over. As Carl put it: 'I can't explain how that whole situation brought us down. We lost our ability to separate the business from the music. The arguments from one would carry over to the other. When the key to your music is harmony and the harmony among you is constantly under attack, your music suffers tremendously.'

The result of all this renewed togetherness was *Keepin' The Summer Alive*, which included five new Brian Wilson-Mike Love compositions and a couple of efforts that teamed Carl with Randy Bachman. The album marked an improvement on its recent predecessors. More Ancient Mariners than Boys now, of course, it would be asking a lot for the group to startle us again, but they've had a hell of a run, been a prime influence through Roy Wood and the Who to the Raspberries' 'Overnite Sensation' – and provided a living musical history of California familiar all over the world.

ROB MACKIE

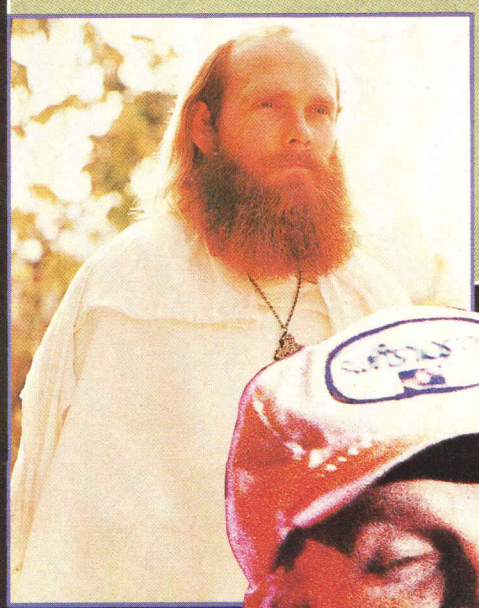
THE BEACH BOYS
Discography

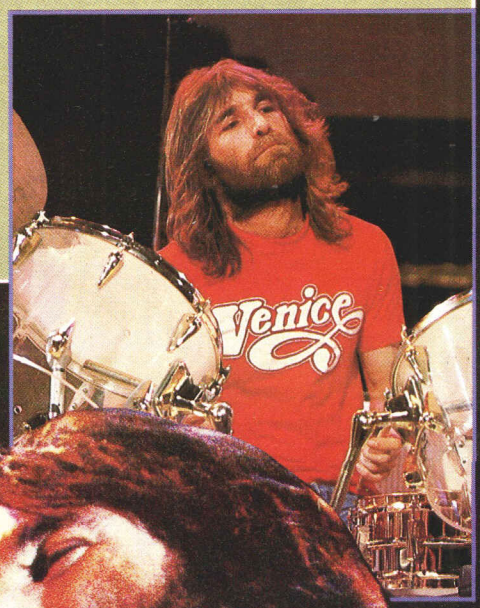
Singles

Surfin'/Luau (Candix 301, 1961); Surfin' Safari/409 (Capitol 4777, 1962); Ten Little Indians/County Fair (Capitol 4880, 1962); Surfin' USA/Shut Down (Capitol 4932, 1963); Surfer Girl/Little Deuce Coupe (Capitol 5009, 1963); Be True To Your School/In My Room (Capitol 5069, 1963); Little Saint Nick/The Lord's Prayer (Capitol 5096, 1963); Pamela Jean/After The Game (Capitol 5102, 1964, credited to the Survivors); Fun, Fun, Fun/Why Do Fools Fall In Love (Capitol 5118, 1964); I Get Around/Don't Worry Baby (Capitol 5174, 1964); When I Grow Up (To Be A Man)/ She Knows Me Too Well (Capitol 5245, 1964); Wendy, Don't Back Down/Little Honda, Hushabye (Capitol 5267, 1964); Dance, Dance, Dance/ Warmth Of The Sun (Capitol 5306, 1964); Man With All The Toys/Blue Christmas (Capitol 5312, 1964); Do You Wanna Dance?/Please Let Me Wonder (Capitol 5372, 1965); Help Me Rhonda/ Kiss Me Baby (Capitol 5395, 1965); California Girls/Let Him Run Wild (Capitol 5464, 1965); The Little Girl I Once Knew/There's No Other (Capitol 5540, 1965); Barbara Ann/Girl Don't Tell Me (Capitol 5561, 1965); Sloop John B/You're So Good To Me (Capitol 5602, 1966); Caroline No/Summer Means New Love (Capitol 5610, 1966, credited to Brian Wilson); Wouldn't It Be Nice/God Only Knows (Capitol 5706, 1966); Good Vibrations/Let's Go Away For A While (Capitol 5676, 1966); Heroes And Villains/You're Welcome (Brother 1001, 1967); Gettin' Hungry/Devoted To You (Brother 1002, 1967, credited to Brian Wilson and Mike Love); Wild Honey/Wind Chimes (Capitol 2028, 1967); Darlin'/Here Today (Capitol 2068, 1967); Friends/Little Bird (Capitol 2160, 1968); Do It Again/Wake The World (Capitol 2239, 1968); Bluebirds Over The Mountain/Never Learn Not To Love (Capitol 2360, 1968); I Can Hear Music/ All I Want To Do (Capitol 2432, 1969); Breakaway/Celebrate The News (Capitol 2530, 1969); Add Some Music To Your Day/Susie Cincinnati (Reprise 0894, 1970); Cottonfields/The Nearest Faraway Place (Capitol 2765, 1970); Slip On Through/This Whole World (Reprise 0926, 1970); Tears In The Morning/Its About Time (Reprise 0957, 1970); Cool Cool Water/Forever (Reprise 0998, 1971); Wouldn't It Be Nice/Times They Are A Changin' (Ode 66106, 1971); Long Promised Road/Deirdre (Reprise 1015, 1971); Long Promised Road/'Til I Die (Reprise 1047, 1971); Surf's Up/Don't Go Near The Water (Reprise 1058, 1971); You Need A Mess Of Help To Stand Alone/Cuddle Up (Reprise 1091, 1972); Marcella/ Hold On Dear Brother (Reprise 1101, 1972); Sail On Sailor/Only With You (Reprise 1138, 1973); California Saga/Funky Pretty (Reprise 1156, 1973); Surfin' USA/Warmth Of The Sun (Capitol 3924, 1974); I Can Hear Music/Let The Wind Blow (Reprise 1310, 1974); Child Of Winter/Susie Cincinnati (Reprise 1321, 1974); Little Honda/ Hawaii (Capitol 4093, 1975); Wouldn't It Be Nice/Caroline No (Reprise 1336, 1975); Rock And Roll Music/TM Song (Reprise 1354, 1976); It's OK/Had To Phone Ya (Reprise 1368, 1976); Graduation Day/Be True To Your School (Capitol 4334, 1976); Susie Cincinnati/Everyone's In Love With You (Reprise 1375, 1976); Honkin' Down The Highway/Solar System (Reprise 1389, 1977); Peggy Sue/Hey Little Tomboy (Reprise 1394, 1978); Here Comes The Night/Baby Blue (Caribou 9026, 1979; Good Timin'/Love Surrounds Me (Caribou 9029, 1979); Lady Lynda/Full Sail (Caribou 9030, 1979); It's A Beautiful Day/ Sumahama (Caribou-Lorimar 9031, 1979); Goin' On/Endless Harmony (Caribou 9032, 1980); Livin' With A Heartache/Santa Ana Winds (Caribou 9033, 1980); The Beach Boys Medley/God Only Knows (Capitol 5030, 1981); Come Go With Me/ Don't Go Near The Water (Caribou 02633, 1981).

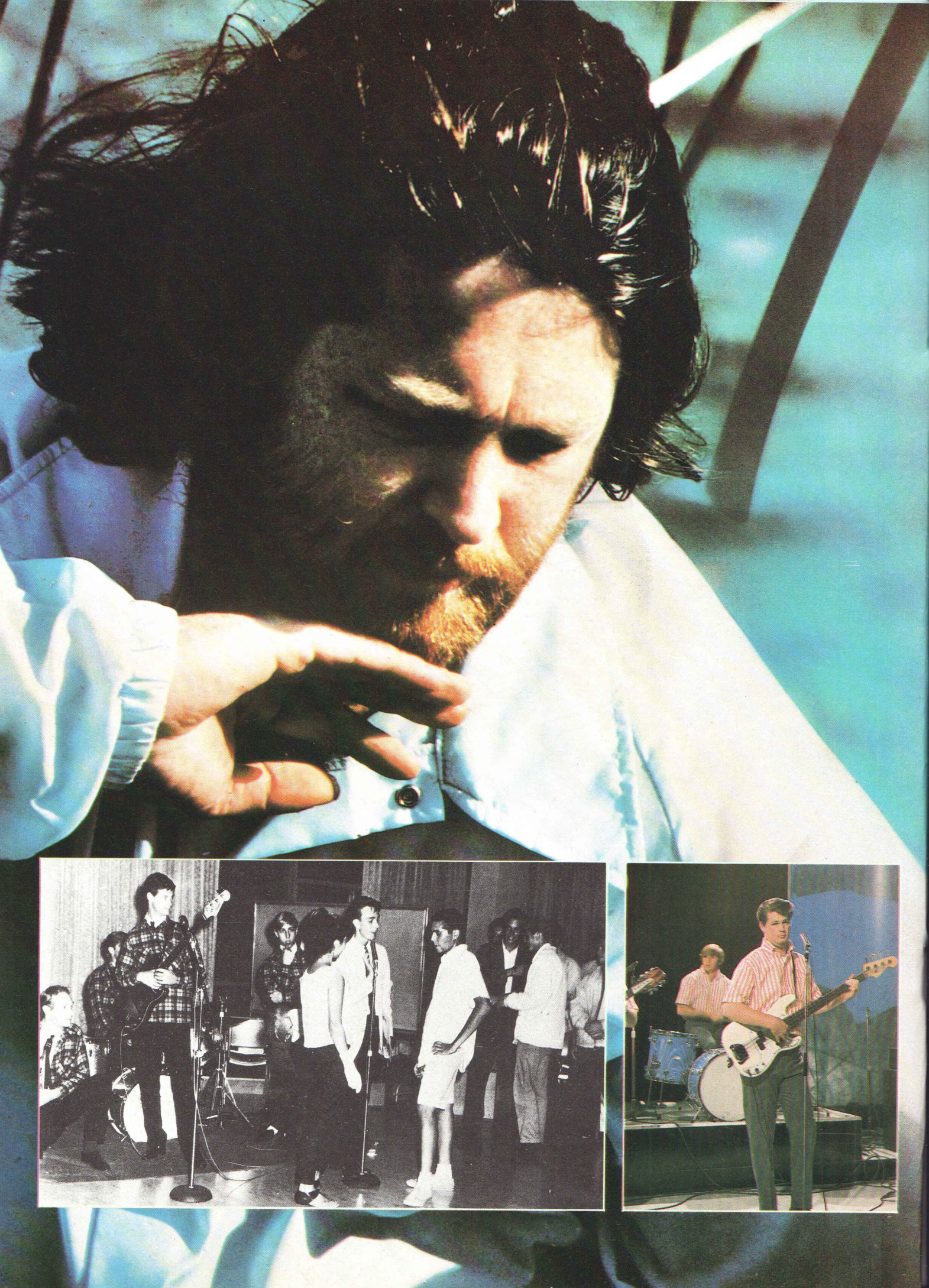
Albums

Surfin' Safari (Capitol 1808); *Surfin' USA* (Capitol 1890); *Surfer Girl* (Capitol 1981); *Little Deuce Coupe* (Capitol 1898); *Shut Down Vol. 2* (Capitol 2027); *All Summer Long* (Captil 2110); *Christmas Album* (Capitol 2164); *Beach Boys Concert* (Capitol 2198); *Beach Boys Today* Capitol 2269); *Summer Days (And Summer Nights)* (Capitol 2354); *Beach Boys Party* (Capitol 2398); *Pet Sounds* Capitol 2458); *Best Of The Beach Boys* (Capitol 2454); *Smiley Smile* (Brother 9001); *Wild Honey* (Capitol 2859); *Friends* (Capitol 2895); *Stack O' Tracks* (Capitol 2893); *20/20* (Capitol 133); *Sunflower* Reprise 6382); *Surf's Up* (Reprise 6453); *Carl And The Passions, So Tough* (Reprise 2083); *Holland* (Reprise 2118); *In Concert* (Reprise 6484; *Endless Summer* (Capitol 11307); *Spirit Of America* (Capitol 11384); *15 Big Ones* (Reprise 2253); *Beach Boys 69* (Capitol 11584); *Beach Boys Love You* (Reprise 2258); *M.I.U. Album* (Reprise 2268);*L.A. (Light Album)* (Caribou 35752); *Keepin' The Summer Alive* (Caribou 36293); *Ten Years Of Harmony* (Caribou 37445).





Inset left: Mike Love got religion. Inset right: Dennis Wilson got rhythm. Below: A rare shot of Mike and Dennis in harmony.



Breakaway

Brian Wilson's strange and troubled career

PEOPLE WITH ONLY a passing interest in the Beach Boys' music will tell you that Brian Wilson, the band's original leader and the composer and producer of their greatest music, is a genius. But this piece of rock folklore did not generate itself spontaneously: it was coined by Derek Taylor during his tenure as the Beach Boys' publicist. Wilson himself disclaimed it, saying 'I'm not a genius, I'm just a hard-working guy', but the claim took on a life of its own. Whether the band, or Brian, ever believed the propaganda is irrelevant; they acted as if they did, and expected everyone else to.

Still, the spurious source of the 'genius' label, and the misuse to which it has been put, does not meant it should be rejected out of hand. One definition of genius is 'natural ability or capacity: the special endowments which fit a man for his peculiar work', and the young Brian Wilson had that in plenty. The way he formed the original surfing sound is evidence of this talent. Taking the teenage harmonies of local stars Jan and Dean and the ringing guitar of Chuck Berry, he created a new amalgam, instantly identifiable and ripe for coast-to-coast imitation. And then he moved on.

Wilson's special ability was his unerring sense of what his audience would accept: when he moved on, he took them with him. In 1962, pop artists were not expected to do this: they stayed the same while tastes changed around them, or they moved sideways onto the cabaret circuit.

Girls 'n' surf

Brian Wilson began to progress as early as *Surfer Girl* (1963), the first album he is credited with producing. Taking charge of the sessions was the first battle he won with his record company, Capitol. Moving out of their studios was the second. By achieving this degree of artistic freedom so early in his career, he helped set a precedent that later bands could follow.

His personal inclinations were less towards the rockers he could dash out in no time than towards the increasingly emotional ballads he sang himself, like 'Surfer Girl' and 'In My Room'. But he was adaptable too, so when car-fever took over from surfing, he could bring out an exquisite ballad like 'Don't Worry Baby' with a lyric about drag racing. By the time of 'Fun, Fun, Fun' he had mastered the art of producing solid pop music to a formula, but the follow-up, 'I Get Around', marked a definite leap forward; the lyrics carried an implied critique of the hit treadmill and the sound was the most complex to date.

Brian Wilson plays bass at an early Beach Boys campus gig in 1962 (far left); but his troubles were beginning to show quite early in his career (left).

Between the release of the two records, in February and May 1964 respectively, something quite unprecedented had happened: the British had invaded the US charts. The Beatles, holding the top five places at the end of March, presented the kind of competition that Wilson needed. 'I Get Around', Number 1 for a month, was his response.

Wilson wanted to match the bold new sounds being produced in the studios of Los Angeles, Detroit and London. Under constant pressure to write, record and perform with the band, he suffered a breakdown on the winter tour of 1964: two more followed rapidly, so he remained at home and concentrated on writing and recording. Aside from the pressures of his working life, Wilson had serious emotional difficulties to contend with. He had always been prone to extreme swings of mood, he had just fired his father as manager of the band, and had been married for just 16 days when he had his first breakdown.

The decision to drop out of the touring circuit may have been regretted by the rest of the band, but it paid artistic dividends, giving Brian time to work on the group's albums. In his new Beverly Hills house, near the heart of California's growing musical community, Wilson spent hours at the piano working on new ideas and studying the records of rival writers and producers, particularly Phil Spector.

Released in 1965, the *Today* album displayed a new harmonic and melodic sophistication, whether on rockers like 'Dance, Dance, Dance' or on the ballads that dominate the second side. It marked the first use of production devices that were to characterise Brian Wilson's most accomplished work: the skilful manipulation of echo, with smooth, churchy reverberation on the vocals and harsh slapback tape and plate echo on drums, guitars and bass; prominent percussion, particularly wood-block; instrumental doubling of solo vocals, and abrupt changes from solo voice to acappella to orchestrated chorale; and warm bass sounds underpinning the arrangement and frequently leading the way through complicated harmonic progressions.

Lyrically, too, the album introduced themes that were to recur in the years to come. Doubt, insecurity and loss of identity are the material of 'She Knows Me Too Well' and 'In The Back Of My Mind' – as they are of Wilson's greatest songs. But at that point the quality of expression did not quite equal the undoubted depth of his personal feelings.

Summer Days (And Summer Nights) saw a growing development in Wilson's style, expressed in wonderfully commercial songs like 'California Girls' and personal triumphs like 'Let Him Run Wild'. But the next real experiment was the following single, 'The Little Girl I Once Knew'. It stopped at Number 20 in *Billboard*'s Hot Hundred in 1965, stymied by over-cautious radio DJs, and Capitol withdrew it, replacing it with the retrogressive 'Barbara Ann' from the stop-gap 'fake-live' *Beach Boys Party* album. Wilson was dismayed. 'Barbara Ann' was a massive hit, reaching Number 2 in the States, but hardly the best preparation for the album that was to come. It broke the gentle pattern of Wilson's progress.

Creative masterpiece

Pet Sounds (1966) was the flowering of Brian Wilson's talent. The album was rightly and widely acclaimed for its sustained mood and unity of tone. It marked the high point of Brian's compulsive need to turn the traumas of his emotional life into the subject-matter of songs. Yet the creative success of *Pet Sounds* was in no small measure due to his collaborator, Tony Asher, who translated Wilson's confused, raw feelings into language of admirable clarity and simplicity.

Wilson once said that the secret of Phil Spector's 'wall of sound' was the way two instruments were combined to produce a distinctively different sound. *Pet Sounds* boasted organ-cellos, drum-basses, violin-flutes, and voices in every combination with instruments. And even on the instrumentals, all the orchestral lines have the melodic qualities of vocal music.

The sound achieved on the album was influential among record producers. It was a product of comparatively primitive technology. Before the days of real multi-tracking, the whole orchestra would be recorded in the studio at one time, with the vocals and a minimum of overdubs being added later. Despite this simple procedure, the results had astonishing depth and vitality, in which leakage of sound between adjacent instruments, distortion, studio backchat and the odd mistake all form part of the sound. When Wilson, like other producers, went over to eight and sixteen-track equipment, which allows each instrument to be recorded separately so that they can be balanced later on, the spontaneity was lost.

By the mid Sixties Brian Wilson was associating with people who encouraged him to stretch himself, and for the first time he was beginning to think of himself as an artist. He was trying to move from the naïve art of his early songs, something that came to him almost as naturally as breathing, to a new type of music, worthy of 'serious' appreciation. Coming to terms with his ignorance of the world outside of Hawthorne, California, he attempted to fill the void with the sort of half-baked mysticism that was to permeate the American rock world in 1967.

Drugs were another part of the rapid mind-expansion programme, although opinions differ about when they became more than just an occasional aid to creativity and provided an habitual escape from family constrictions. The boys themselves were rapidly assuming the status of optional extras on the Brian Wilson creative juggernaut. Marginal participants in *Pet Sounds*, they recognised its quality as it neared completion. But Brian's new music caused ructions.

'Good Vibrations' followed shortly after the release of *Pet Sounds*. Starting life as a heavy R&B number, it went through some 20 versions in four different studios over a six-month period before being edited down from three pieces by engineer Chuck Britz. Again Wilson showed himself to be on the right track; released in October 1966, it became a million-seller.

Smile was intended to eclipse all that had gone before. Brian and his principal collaborator, Van Dyke Parkes, wanted to produce a work of 'significance'. Some idea of the diversity of its themes (America, nature, religion) can be gained from the few tracks that eventually emerged from the débâcle – 'Heroes And Villains', 'Cabinessence', 'Surf's Up', 'The Elements Suite', 'Our Prayer' and 'Wonderful'. The best guides to its style are 'Heroes And Villains', with its astonishingly complex vocal arrangement, and later 'reconstructed' songs like 'Cabinessence' and 'Surf's Up', cobbled together by the rest of the band without Brian's assistance, but using scraps of the original recordings.

One reason why only fragments of *Smile* appeared is that Brian worked only on pieces of music, rather than complete songs, at that time. The completed fragments were dubbed down on to acetate discs, with the intention that they would later be assembled into longer pieces – but this never happened.

Instead, the project fell apart. Whether you blame drugs (as do the rest of the band), the rest of the band (as do most of Brian's friends of that time) or a bit of both, it is clear that by the time Van Dyke Parks dropped out in February 1967, Brian was in trouble. Ill-advised legal hassles and aimless experimentation had shattered his concentration, and he slid into a crippling state of paranoia.

Despite Brian's mounting problems, a version of 'Heroes And Villains' did

Below left: Brian Wilson in his role as producer. Below right: Brian rejoins the Beach Boys at the Whiskey A-Go-Go in 1970. At the keyboards is Darryl Dragon of the Captain and Tennille. Inset left: The design for Smile, *the Beach Boys LP that never was. Inset right:* Pet Sounds, *Brian Wilson's masterpiece.*

appear, in July 1967. Although the beauty of the released single is obvious, it is said to be no more than a pale shadow of some of the earlier edits, which ran up to 12 minutes. A modest hit, it marked the end of an era for the Beach Boys.

Instead of the epic *Smile*, the world got the shambolic *Smiley Smile*, released in September 1967. Nick Kent's description of it as 'do-it-yourself acid casualty doo-wop' is apposite. Recorded in a fortnight and dubbed down in one night, the album displayed only a few moments of tantalising brilliance in the re-hashed *Smile* material, but coming after the build-up for that album it proved to be a massive disappointment.

Wild Honey, the album that followed within three months of the release of *Smiley Smile*, was a vast improvement, being suffused with the simple joy of collaborative music-making for the first time in years. However, 1967 was no time for a rootsy white-soul album. It was misunderstood then and has been ever since. Subsequently there has been a host of albums containing original material. Brian's physical involvement has ranged from minimal (on *Surf's Up* and *Holland*) to extensive (*Beach Boys Love You*), but on the later albums his emotional and intellectual commitment and influence has been slight.

These albums contain many Brian Wilson songs. Some are complete and of real quality. There are also many fragments, bits and pieces that do indeed suggest the work of an authentic genius, albeit a confused and unhappy one.

Ageing adolescent

There is a postscript. In the late Seventies, as part of a bizarre public exercise in behaviourist therapy, Brian's psychiatrist, Dr Eugene Landy, arranged for the reclusive and grossly overweight musician to make a 'comeback'. Accounts of the comeback make harrowing reading, and the songs that accompanied it on *15 Big Ones* and *Beach Boys Love You*, do not make for pleasant listening. Still burdened by the feelings that first afflicted him in the late Sixties, that his naturally high voice and falsetto were effeminate, he sang in a hoarse, cracking growl. And the new songs, written as occupational therapy, displayed a desire to regress to adolescent concerns that was embarrassing, even disturbing, coming from a 34-year-old man.

Recent albums have included 'new' Brian Wilson songs – which sometimes have an extended history. And after the atrocious *M.I.U. Album* (1978) Bruce Johnston returned to handle production.

There seems little chance that Brian Wilson will again make important music. His family, friends, critics and fans have all looked for someone to blame, but Brian's downfall was the result of an unavoidable conflict within himself. He was a young man with immense natural gifts to whom music came as easily as breathing. But he wanted to go beyond that to become, self-consciously, an artist. He lost confidence in the value of his instinctive reactions and, in time, came to despise them. In those natural responses lay his genius; without them he was doomed to an irreversible decline.

JOHN MORRISH

HEROES & VILLAINS

The Beach Boys' musical associates

FIRST AND FOREMOST, the story of the Beach Boys is the story of Brian, Mike, Carl, Al and Dennis, their friendship, their disputes, and their music. But it is not only that: the story would not have been the same without the contribution of an army of session musicians and, less often, of a select band of collaborators.

The instigators of the Beach Boys' career were the Wilson parents. Murry and Audree Wilson encouraged the nascent musicians in stick and carrot fashion. Audree offered interest and praise; with Murry the stick was not entirely metaphorical, but he provided the drive that won them a major label contract when they were no more than raw beginners with a local hit to their name. A would-be songwriter himself, Murry had a useful collection of show-business contacts, but his attempts to direct the band's music to suit his tastes were doomed to failure.

As the band's first manager, Murry harboured small-time attitudes that came to seem irrelevant when the boys became an international success, and he was fired in 1964. The breach this caused was never entirely healed, especially after Murry sold the band's publishing company to A&M records in 1969 without informing them. Only Dennis, who most resembled him, stayed close to Murry. When his father died in 1973, Brian, who had suffered the most from his incessant and misguided criticism, disappeared rather than attend the funeral. Yet Murry's death marked the beginning of Brian's longest and deepest period of depression.

Helpers all

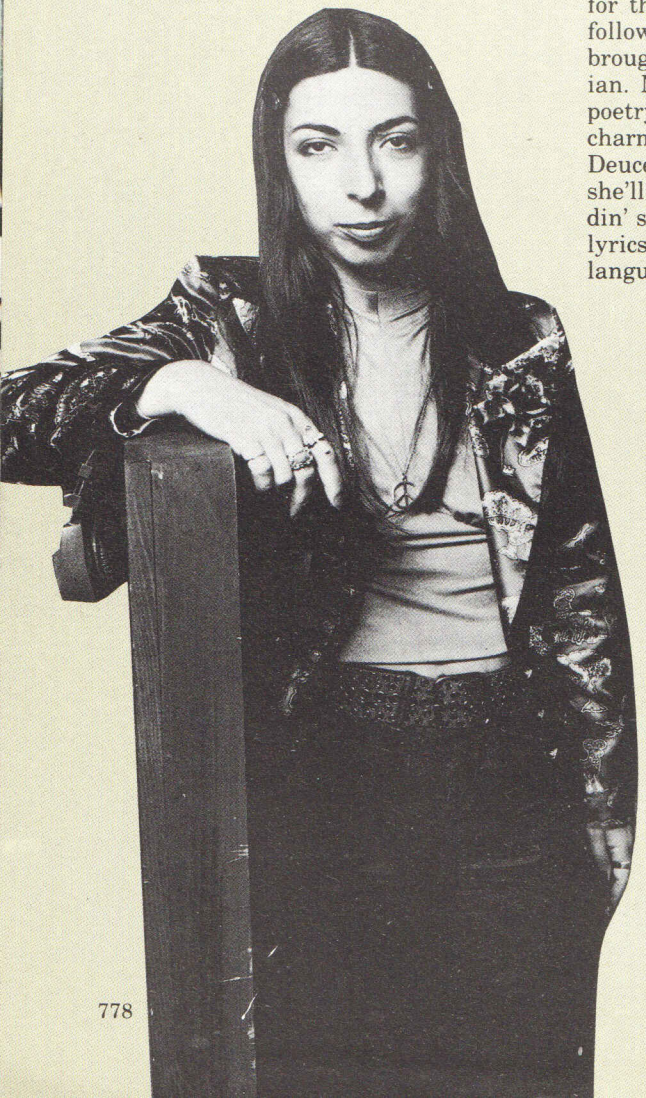
Brian Wilson's first writing collaborator outside the group was Gary Usher, whom he first met in January 1962. Usher played bass and guitar to Brian's organ and piano, and together they wrote a number of important songs, such as '409' and 'In My Room'. In later years Brian was to pay tribute to Usher for having 'showed me how to write songs, showed me the spirit of competition'.

Brian and the rest of the band had found it easy enough to gather the lyrics for their songs, but the car craze which followed needed expert knowledge, so they brough in local disc jockey Roger Christian. Nobody could have called his lyrics poetry, but the jargon has a curious charm, even 20 years on: 'Just a little Deuce Coupe with a flat head mill / But she'll walk a Thunderbird like it's standin' still.' The key to the success of these lyrics lies in the particularity of the language: it invites the listener into the cult, like one of its adherents, rather than describing it from a distance.

Some time in 1963, Brian met Marilyn Rovell, then 15, her sister Diane, and their cousin Ginger who together formed a girl-group called the Honeys. In the spring of 1964 Brian produced three records for them, and by the end of that year he was married to Marilyn. The two Rovell sisters are ever-present in the Beach Boys story: as wife and sister-in-law, as session organisers, and as the vocal group Spring (later American Spring), Brian's chief extra-mural musical interest in the Seventies.

During the early Sixties the Beach Boys were part of a close surf-music community that included Jan and Dean, to whom they lent songs and the odd bit of vocal assistance, and Bruce and Terry. 'Bruce' was Bruce Johnston. When Brian dropped out of the touring band at the end of 1964 they looked around for a replacement, and after a brief interlude with Glen Campbell, then a celebrated session guitarist, they settled on Bruce.

Bruce Johnston joined the Beach Boys on 9 April 1965, contributing at first



Marilyn and Diane Rovell made up the vocal group Spring. Marilyn was Brian Wilson's wife.

backing vocals and, later, songs like 'Tears In The Morning' and 'Disney Girls (1957)'.

Johnston's songs, however, were marred by sentimentality, and his productions tended to be bland. But since the late Seventies he has performed a valuable service to the group by taking over the production chores from Brian Wilson and giving them *L.A. (Light Album)* and *Keepin' The Summer Alive.*

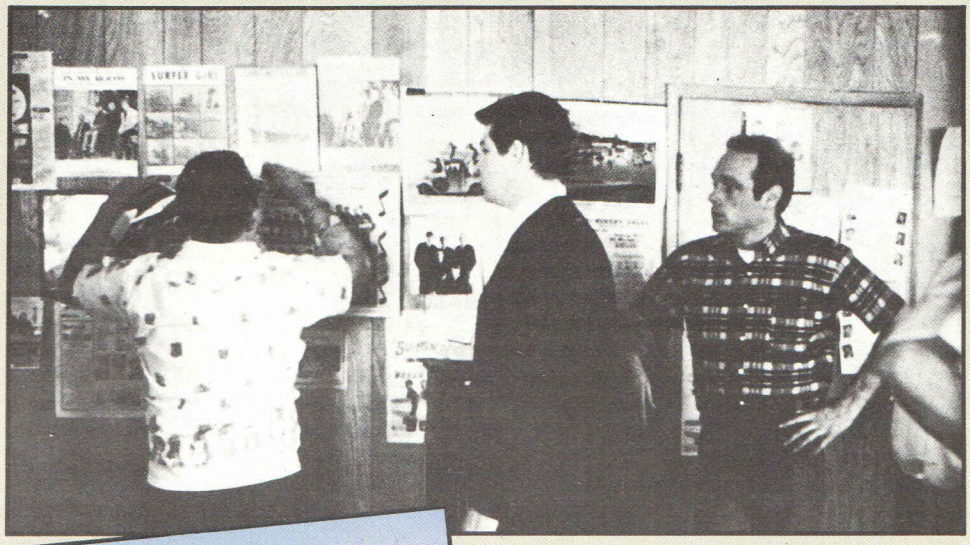
Genius or amateur?

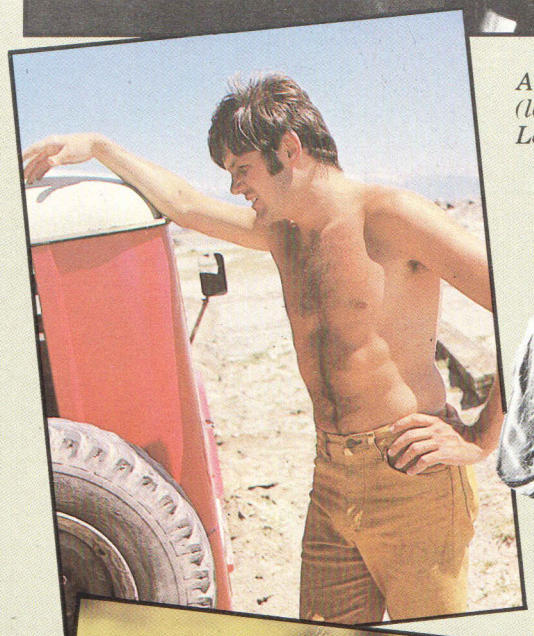
With Bruce taking his place on the band's innumerable tours, Brian was left at home to come up with new songs and to mix with the members of Los Angeles' burgeoning counter-culture. It was here that he met Tony Asher, an advertising copywriter and composer of jingles, and with the follow-up album to *Summer Days (And Summer Nights)* running behind schedule, Brian needed help.

Asher was to become Brian's lyricist for *Pet Sounds*, an album usually considered autobiographical. As Asher remarked, 'It's fair to say that the general tenor of his lyrics was always his and the actual choice of words was usually mine. I was really just his interpreter.' Together they created the verbal and tonal poems that are the Beach Boys' greatest claim to artistic recognition; but the relationship was not to last. Asher became scornful of Brian's interests outside music and of the 'marshmallow mysticism' that he was beginning to indulge in at that time. 'It was a great joy making music with him, but any other relationship with Brian was a great chore', he told Nick Kent in 1975, adding that Brian was 'a genius musician but an amateur human being'. He has since claimed he was misquoted.

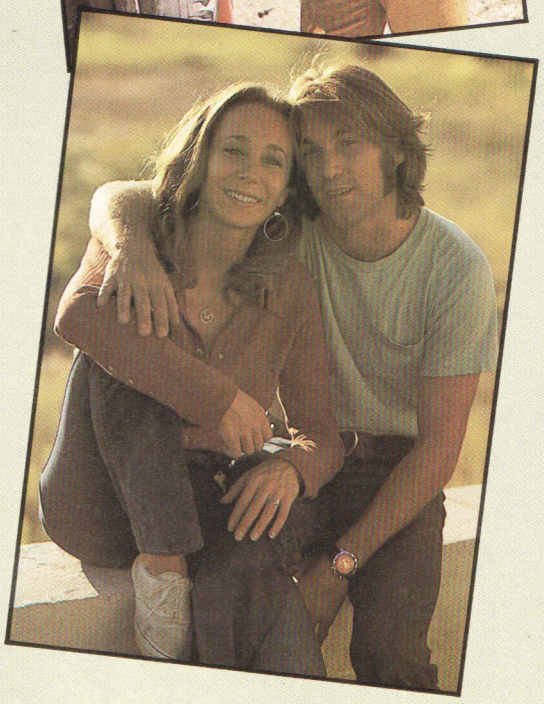
Brian's next and most intriguing collaboration was very different in style. Van Dyke Parks was nobody's interpreter: he considered himself an artist, and *Smile* was to be a collaboration between equals. Parks had been a child actor, and went on to study composition and write film music for Walt Disney. The words he wrote for Brian's fragile, limpid melodies were grandiose and obscure, peppered with alliteration and word-play. As poetry, they would be condemned for imprecision and incoherence; as lyrics, they seem too flashy and self-important.

'Surf's Up', a song Brian and Parks wrote in an evening, was to become first a legendary lost masterpiece and then an anthem. It displays both the peaks and troughs of Parks' style. In florid, rococo imagery it tells of a decadent Europe waiting to be swept away, of orchestral music in concert halls and Auld Lang Syne in dim cellars. And then it switches to the narrator, in a moment of real power: 'A choke of grief heart hardened I beyond belief / A broken man too tough to cry.' But the emotional resonance of this passage comes as much from what is known of Brian's life as from the quality of the song's lyrics themselves.





Above: Father and manager Murry Wilson (left), with Brian Wilson and Mike Love. Left: Bruce Johnston, who joined in 1965.



Happy family: Dennis Wilson with his wife Barbara (above). His involvement with another family, that of Charles Manson (right), had brought him misery and cost him a fortune.

This collaboration didn't last long either. Mike Love apparently asked Parks what he meant in 'Cabinessence' by 'Over and over the crow flies uncover the corn field' – a reasonable enough question. But Parks took offence and fled to Warner Brothers. There he recorded his first album, entitled *Song Cycle*.

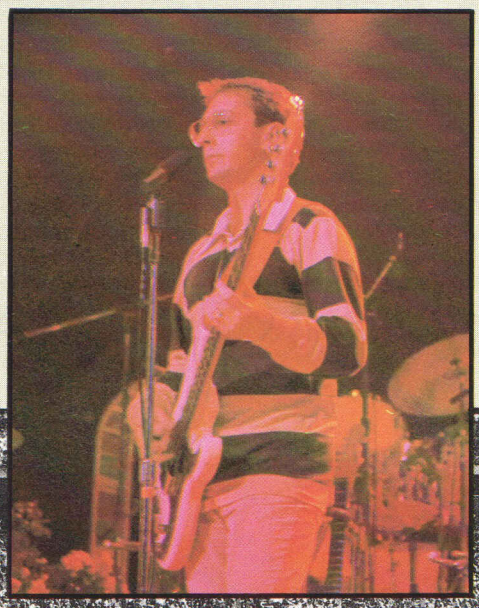
Darker sides

In the years following the *Smile* débâcle, when Brian Wilson was little more than a spectral presence at Beach Boy sessions, the band were under pressure to come up with more material of their own. In the spring of 1968, Dennis Wilson paid 5000 dollars for two songs by a friend and house-guest. One was called 'Be Still' and went on to *Friends*; the other, called 'Cease To Exist', had to be rewritten, becoming first 'Cease To Resist' and then 'Never Learn Not To Love', and went on to the *20/20* album. Their author was Charles Manson.

The involvement of Dennis with the Manson Family was intense while it lasted; but, by the time of the Sharon Tate murders in the autumn of 1969, he had long-since tired of being exploited by the Family, which some sources say cost him as much as 100,000 dollars. Dennis was not involved in the murders, nor knew of what had occurred, but after Manson's arrest he was the subject of constant death-threats from members of the Family, as were other members of the Beach Boys.

At the beginning of the Seventies, the Beach Boys found themselves involved with Jack Rieley, who managed to convince the band that before becoming a disc jockey he had been a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist. This was untrue, but before it was discovered Rieley helped the Beach Boys to convince the US public that this most hedonistic of bands had a political and social conscience.

James William Guercio (below) managed Chicago and the Beach Boys, and played bass with both. The two bands jammed together in Oakland in 1975 (bottom).



Albums like *Surf's Up*, *Carl And The Passions*, *So Tough* and *Holland* are heavily laden with Rieley's lyrics and at one point his singing – in Brian's 'A Day In The Life Of A Tree'. He was responsible for dragging Brian's original 'Surf's Up' tape out of him for inclusion on the album; he was responsible for the departure of Bruce Johnston in 1972; and he was responsible for the Dutch jaunt of 1972 that gave the Beach Boys a respectable album (*Holland*) but massive financial difficulties.

For *Carl And The Passions*, *So Tough*, the band used two new members, exiled South Africans Ricky Fataar and Blondie Chaplin. Some have suggested that this was another Jack Rieley idea, to give the band a 'multi-racial' image, but that seems unlikely since the Fataar/Chaplin band Flame were Carl Wilson's protégés. On *Holland*, they contributed some of the best Seventies Beach Boys music, notably Ricky Fataar's vocal on 'Sail On Sailor'. In the mid Seventies the Beach Boys shared a tour and a manager (James William Guercio) with Chicago, but since then they have reverted to their own resources.

JOHN MORRISH

THE GREAT MUSICIANS

Mitch Mitchell

Mitch Mitchell did his best work with Jimi Hendrix (above and overleaf); they seemed to nurture each other's talents.

It is difficult to convey in retrospect the explosive impact made by the arrival of the Jimi Hendrix Experience in late 1966. People had seen or heard nothing quite like it before. 'Arguably most important instrumentalist in history of rock' is how the *N.M.E. Book Of Rock* described Hendrix, and audiences at the Experience's early gigs tended to resemble a Who's Who of star musicians. And yet it is often overlooked that this was a *group*, with a group sound and a quite astonishingly talented drummer.

With the possible exception of Keith Moon, it is hard to imagine a wilder drummer than Mitch Mitchell. Aged 19 when he made his first recordings with Hendrix, his 'take no prisoners' approach was the perfect foil to the controlled anarchy of Hendrix's guitar playing. Mitchell's trick was to maintain a barrage of perpetual motion around the kit. The first single, 'Hey Joe', was a good statement of intent; basically a slow-tempo number with a surprisingly restrained guitar track (intro and solo aside), the song is built round a simple eight-bar progression repeated throughout. Right from the start Mitchell claims the last two bars of each eight for a spectacular slam right round the kit. By the end of the song he is dipping and rolling and thundering through the whole eight.

In common with Keith Moon, Mitchell didn't accept the notion of drummer purely as timekeeper, holding down the beat. That job was left to bassist Noel Redding. Mitchell would always be in the forefront sparring with Hendrix. 'Manic Depression' (from *Are You Experienced?*) was another prime example of his dynamic style. The guitar and bass are focused on a single-notes unison riff overlaid with a typically wry half-spoken, half-sung Hendrix vocal. But underneath is an insane spiralling drum pattern that builds steadily throughout. The end is a succession of increasingly manic drum breaks culminating in a final wash of Hendrix guitar noise. It's one of many incredible Hendrix numbers propelled and immeasurably enhanced by Mitchell's percussive intensity. His initiative and steadfast refusal to conform to regular drum-patterns are integral to the dynamic tension of these songs.

Mitchell's background prior to Hendrix was in jazz. The fluency of his playing reveals the influence of one of his heroes, the great jazz drummer Elvin Jones. Before joining Hendrix he played with Georgie Fame and the Blue Flames. He held his sticks in the traditional marching or military drum-grip as opposed to the more familiar matched grip favoured by most of his rock contemporaries, and over the years he built up an impressive mastery of technique. And yet there was nothing slick about his playing. A diminutive figure, he set his stool low, and tended to hunch forward, thrashing round his kit, applying his sophisticated knowledge of drum rudiments to the crude force and brainstorm inspiration of Hendrix's music.

Mitchell most often used Gretsch drums when playing with Hendrix. Initially using a small kit based around a single bass-drum, a set-up he has always preferred for studio work, he was not long in following the trend of those days and acquiring an extended double-bass drum kit for live work. In keeping with his jazz background, he tended to tune the drums high and use little or no damping, giving the tom-toms a clattery, resonant quality. On one number, 'Up From The Skies' from *Axis: Bold As Love*, he even revealed himself to be an unusually adept brush player as the band romped through a Hendrix swing pastiche.

Mitchell tended to shy away from solos. At the time Ginger Baker was making much capital out of doing 20-minute set-piece solos and one felt that perhaps Mitchell ought to be keeping the Experience's end up. In a sense, though, he was always playing a solo, and on the odd occasions when the other instruments stopped – for example, the 'Voodoo Chile' jam on *Electric Ladyland* – he seemed at a loss to know how to take it any higher. There is a brief pleasingly quirky drum introduction to the live 'In From The Storm' on the *Isle Of Wight* album.

Of course he didn't always get it right. Mitchell's commitment to such an improvisatory style of playing, and the energy and unpredictability of the Experience's music, combined to guarantee occasional lapses, as on the appallingly sloppy 'National Anthem'/'Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' segue on *Hendrix In The West* (though followed by a consummate live version of 'Little Wing'). A criticism of Mitchell's explosive playing style is that it was altogether too busy. There is some merit in this argument, particularly regarding one or two of the gentler numbers – 'The Wind Cries Mary' and 'Angel', for example – where Mitchell, although playing quieter, still seems to be chafing against the mood of the song. But I don't subscribe to the view that Hendrix needed a down the line tie-it-to-the-beat drummer. Buddy Miles was one such player who briefly collaborated with Hendrix in the Band of Gypsies to produce one dull eponymous album of which even Hendrix himself said: 'If it had been up to me I would never have put it out.' Otherwise, for the entire duration of Hendrix's surprisingly short three-year recording career, he played with Mitch Mitchell.

Mitchell has done nothing remotely as impressive since Hendrix died. He's been involved with a rather indulgent loose jamming aggregate, Hinckley's Heroes, and has done a lot of anonymous session work in America. A pro to the tips of his toes, he can turn in an able session for whoever's paying the tab, but it needs a genius to realise his genius. His symbiotic musical relationship with Hendrix exposed and nurtured the flamboyant Mr Hyde side of his drumming. Sadly, we lost more than just a great guitarist when Jimi Hendrix died.

DAVID SINCLAIR

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